Questions and Answers about the Service Array Survey

1. Why is the survey being done? The survey is required in the Program Enhancement Plan (PEP) to respond to the federal Child and Family Service Review finding that Wisconsin does not provide all of the essential services needed for child welfare and services are not available in all counties.

2. Who developed the survey? The survey was developed by a workgroup including representatives from nine counties, the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW), Area Administration, and the DCFS Office of Program Evaluation and Planning. The county representatives were appointed by the Wisconsin County Human Services Association and include a mix of large, medium and small counties.

3. What information will be collected using the survey? The survey requests counties to identify if specific services are available, the importance of the services to safety and permanency, accessibility of services, funding sources, and barriers to providing services.

4. Why are so many services included in the survey? The survey includes 83 services in five services categories. The services included were based on a model survey from the National Child Welfare Resource Center on Organizational Improvement. The survey workgroup determined the final list of services based on piloting the survey in the nine counties and BMCW. The survey does not include child welfare services deemed by the workgroup to be available in all counties without barriers to client access, such as child protective service investigation and foster care.

5. What data will be tabulated from the survey? The survey results will be used to determine the statewide availability of the services counties indicate are the most important for safety and permanency. The survey results will also be used to determine the extent to which essential services are accessible by child welfare clients and barriers that exist to providing services. The funding data will provide context information on the resources used to provide services.

6. What data will be provided to the federal government? The DCFS will report statewide summary information from the survey results on the availability of essential services and major barriers to client access. The PEP specifies that gaps in services will be identified and DFCS will work with counties to develop strategies to address service gaps.

7. Will more detailed information be made available to counties? The DCFS will prepare a report to the PEP Implementation Team with more detail that will be shared with counties. The survey results will be analyzed to determine trends by

region and type of county (urban vs. rural). Counties will be able to see how their individual results compare with statewide or regional averages.

8. Will counties with service gaps be required to fund the essential services? The DCFS recognizes that resources are limited at both the county and State level. The PEP deliberately does not commit either the State or counties to provide additional funding to fill service gaps. The survey results will provide information to work with service providers and promote collaboration among counties to improve service availability within existing resources.

9. Will the survey results be used to seek additional funding for counties? There is no commitment that the survey will lead to a State budget request for additional funding. The survey results will be helpful to identify specific services most in need of additional resources and show the extent that essential services are supported by county funds.

10. Will the survey results be used against counties? The DCFS will not use the survey results to decrease State funding or force individual counties to re-deploy how they currently use State funds. Counties will hopefully find the survey information helpful in making county budget decisions to target resources for services that are most important for safety and permanency.

11. Why is the survey being done on the web? The web method for the survey has been used for other PEP-related surveys and the survey software allows the results to be tabulated quickly. DCFS will likely conduct more surveys using the web software.

12. What county staff should be involved in answering the survey? The DCFS recommends that counties use a team to respond to the questions, including staff familiar with community services and the funding sources involved. The survey has five sections and some staff may be involved in only part of the survey.

13. How much time is needed to complete the survey? To make entering the survey as efficient as possible, answers can be written on a paper copy of the survey and anyone can enter the responses on behalf of the county. Entry will take a few hours, but can be done in multiple sessions if needed. If staff stop entry, they should remember what question they left off at because the survey software does not return to the last question answered.

14. What if county staff need help with the survey? Counties can contact Area Administration or David Sorenson of DCFS-OPEP for assistance in completing the survey.